

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A1NEW YORK TIMES
21 December 1985

Israelis Drop Spy Unit, U.S. Says

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 — The State Department said today that Israel had dismantled the unit that directed the activities of Jonathan Jay Pollard, a United States Navy analyst accused of stealing hundreds of pages of classified documents.

In a statement this afternoon, the State Department said it was satisfied that a team of American officials dispatched to Israel to investigate the case had received "full cooperation." It also said the Israelis had returned to the United States all of the documents obtained "in an unauthorized manner."

The American team left Israel today after a week of discussions that had been conducted under unusual secrecy on both sides.

Operation Said to Be Unauthorized

According to the State Department, Israel told the team that the covert operation involving Mr. Pollard had been undertaken against Government policy and "without authority."

"The Government of Israel has acted to prevent any repetition of such activities," the statement issued here said.

Officials said the statement represented the views of the American team and had been issued in the name of the United States alone. But Charles E. Redman, a State Department spokesman, said at a briefing, "There are many aspects of this statement which involve agreement with the Israeli Government, so that this is, in that sense, a joint statement."

Israeli Government sources have said Mr. Pollard was working for a little-known office in the Israeli Defense Ministry called the Liaison Bureau for Scientific Affairs, which is known in Hebrew by its acronym, Lekem. According to these officials, the American team questioned several Israeli diplomats who had handled Mr. Pollard, as well as Rafael Eitan, a former senior counterintelligence official who headed Lekem.

The release of the document was made after several days of delicate negotiations between American and Israeli officials in an attempt to write a mutually acceptable joint communiqué. Government sources in Israel said the Israelis had wanted a fairly vague statement stressing what they saw as their extraordinary cooperation. The Israelis, these sources said, also had wanted a statement that would close the book on an affair that has raised tensions in the longstanding relationship between the two countries.

American officials, while pleased with Israel's cooperation, had wanted a statement that would underscore the commitment not to engage in espionage again. The Americans also were reluctant to issue a statement saying officially that the case was closed. American officials were said to be afraid that they would look foolish if new cases emerged.

The members of the team from the Justice Department left Israel early this morning without agreement on a joint communiqué. But Abraham D. Sofaer, the State Department legal adviser, stayed behind to work out what might be said publicly about the meetings.

The statement issued here today did not mention Mr. Pollard by name. But Mr. Redman said the only individuals being prosecuted were Mr. Pollard and his wife, Anne Henderson-Pollard. Asked whether the team had inquired about other cases of espionage that may have been conducted by the same unit in the Israeli Government, Mr. Redman indicated that the issue had been explored but there had been no new revelations.

"I can't answer that one directly," he said. "But we did not go there with our eyes closed."

Last week, a senior Defense Department official said that since the arrest of Mr. Pollard, the United States had reduced its sharing of intelligence information with Israel, mainly in the form of cancelling several meetings between Americans and their Israeli counterparts.

The statement issued by the State Department said that "based on the solid foundation of deep friendship, close affinity, and mutual trust, both Governments reaffirm their determination to continue close cooperation in all fields." Officials said this was intended to suggest that the intelligence cooperation would be resumed.

The statement said that "the United States team has had full access to the persons with knowledge of facts relevant to the mission."

Shortly after the arrest of Mr. Pollard, Israel assured the United States that it would cooperate with the investigation, a step unheard of in an espionage case. Typically, diplomats caught spying against the United States are formally or informally invited to leave this country.

But because Israel is an ally, United States officials insisted on the right to question the diplomats who had directed Mr. Pollard's activities. The two, Ilan Ravid and Yosef Yagor, left the United States on Nov. 22, one day after the Pollards were arrested after trying to flee into the Israeli embassy. Mr. Ravid was deputy science attaché in Washington and Mr. Yagor was science attaché at the Israeli Consulate in

New York

According to American officials, Mr. Pollard had telephoned the embassy and asked Mr. Ravid what he should do about the F.B.I.'s investigation of him. He was told that the Israelis would help him if he could elude the surveillance, an F.B.I. agent testified at a pre-trial hearing.

After the arrests, Israel quickly promised cooperation. The statement today said that the American team was satisfied with Israel's cooperation. According to Israeli Government sources, the team retrieved the documents and interviewed Mr. Ravid, Mr. Yagor, Mr. Eitan, and several former Israeli diplomats and clerical staff members who had been stationed in the United States.

According to Israeli sources, Mr. Pollard handed over two kinds of documents to Israeli officials.

In one category were top-secret American intelligence reports related to Soviet weapon systems used by Arab armies. For the most part, these involved codes, computer software data and electronics information related to the operation of tanks, missile systems and jet aircraft.

The second category of documents passed on by Mr. Pollard, according to Israeli officials, consisted of a variety of American intelligence assessments and estimates relating to Israeli military activities.